

FORECAST

TODAY

SUN

MON

50°/40°

61°/55°

70°/63°

Complete forecast, A2

LIFE

Hard work pays off

Florence native Casey Eggleston has dedicated his life to contributing to positive outcomes. **B10**

NATION & WORLD

FBI failed to investigate tip on Florida suspect

The FBI received a tip last month that the suspect in the Florida school shooting had a “desire to kill” and access to guns and could be plotting an attack, but agents failed to investigate, the agency said Friday. **A5**

WEIRD NEWS

Calif. firefighters rescue 2 dogs from cliff

SAN FRANCISCO — It’s usually cats in trees that need a firefighter’s help but not Friday, when two dogs were rescued by San Francisco firefighters after sliding halfway down a cliff. San Francisco Fire Department spokesman Lt. Jonathan Baxter says the dogs got stuck on a cliff at Fort Funston. A 14-member crew helped in their rescue.

But Baxter says it was firefighter paramedic Art Julaton who was lowered down to strap the dogs in a harness and carry them back up to firm land, where they wagged their tales in gratitude. Baxter says the dogs were not hurt but reminds dog owners to keep an eye on their furry friends.

He says Fort Funston is a popular area for dog walking and hiking.

— The Associated Press

ONLINE

More photos from high school basketball games at **TimesDaily.com**.

YOUR OPINION

Thursday’s question: Do you believe it’s too easy for the average person to legally purchase an assault weapon?

• **Yes:** 62.8%

• **No:** 37.2%

Today’s question: Which issue should lawmakers begin with reforms? Vote at **TimesDaily.com**.

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TIMES DAILY

FLORENCE ■ MUSCLE SHOALS ■ SHEFFIELD ■ TUSCUMBIA ■ NORTHW

Prep basketball: Muscle Shoals boys fall to Austin in Northwest Regional tournament. **B1**

Saturday, February 17, 2018

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DON STRAIT

St. Florian mayor dies

By Tom Smith
Senior Staff Writer

ST. FLORIAN — Lauderdale County Commissioner Fay Parker said no one could ever doubt Don Strait’s loyalty to the town.

“He was dedicated to the town. He loved St. Florian, and everything he did was to make it better for the people who lived there,” Parker said.

“He was a champion for St.

Florian and he left his mark on the town,” added Keith Jones, director of the Northwest Alabama Council of Local Governments.

Strait died Friday morning after a brief illness. He was 70.

Strait, who has served on the Town Council, was in his second term as mayor. He was elected in August 2012, defeating one opponent. He ran unopposed in 2016.

Jones said Strait was committed to seeing St. Florian grow.

“He worked at it constantly,” Jones said. “He worked to improve retail sales taxes by getting some new businesses to move. He was proud of seeing the town with a sales tax increase.”

Lauderdale County Probate Judge Will Motlow was the town’s first municipal judge in 2013 after Strait worked with the council to re-establish St. Florian Municipal Court.

SEE STRAIT, A3

St. Florian Mayor Don Strait

2016 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Counsel: Russians meddled with race

In this Sept. 20, 2010 file photo, businessman Yevgeny Prigozhin, left, shows Russian President Vladimir Putin, around his factory which produces school meals, outside St. Petersburg, Russia. [ALEXEI DRUZHININ, SPUTNIK, KREMLIN POOL PHOTO VIA ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE PHOTO]

By Eric Tucker
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — In a historic indictment, the U.S. special counsel accused 13 Russians Friday of an elaborate plot to disrupt the 2016 presidential election, charging them with running a huge but hidden social media trolling campaign aimed in part at helping Republican Donald Trump defeat Democrat Hillary Clinton.

The federal indictment, brought by special counsel Robert Mueller, represents

the most detailed allegations to date of illegal Russian meddling during the campaign that sent Trump to the White House. It also marks the first criminal charges against Russians believed to have secretly worked to influence the outcome.

The Russian organization was funded by Yevgeny Prigozhin, the indictment says. He is a wealthy St. Petersburg businessman and a member of President Vladimir Putin’s inner circle.

SEE PROBE, A3

ELECTRICITY

Rate increase could occur this year

By Robert Palmer
Staff Writer

FLORENCE — Electricity Department Manager Richard Morrissey said he has no choice but to ask for a rate increase later this year. It would be the first local increase in 10 years.

In a meeting of the city council’s Utilities Committee, Morrissey said a recent review of the department’s bond rating by Standard and Poor showed revenue is lagging. Without increasing the department’s revenue, the rating will be lowered, damaging the ability to borrow money on the bond market for capital projects.

He said it is likely he will ask for a 3 percent rate increase beginning in October.

“Our current rating is based on a 3-percent increase in revenue. Without that, our rating will be lowered,” Morrissey said.

The rate increase would generate \$3.5 million a year, he said.

The Electricity Department’s S&P rating is AA-, he said. But S&P officials said the rating continued at that level with the understanding the department will increase revenue in the coming fiscal year.

Morrissey said a survey of all state municipal electricity departments showed Florence’s net revenue is at 92 percent of the state average.

“We sell power at cost, in some cases below cost,” he said. “We are changing that this October.”

SEE RATES, A3

See More in Today’s Classified Section

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